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ABSTRACT

The two issues of volume 5 and one issue of volume 6 of the newsletter contain articles on conferences and programs concerning language testing in Europe. Articles topics include: description of proficiency levels for a Council of Europe testing program; adult education and language testing in Germany; tests of Norwegian as a foreign language; the national foreign language certificate in Finnish; a user's guide for examiners using the Council of Europe tests; a language center in Luxembourg; the certificate of Dutch as a foreign language; language instruction at the University of Stockholm (Sweden); and news from association members. (MSE)

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ALTE News

Volumes 5 and 6

1996-1997

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Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE)

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ALTE NEWS

July 1996
Vol. 5, No. 1

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Beyond Threshold: the Council of Europe develops the Vantage Level

The 12th Meeting of ALTE was held in Frankfurt on 24 and 25 April 1996. The meeting was hosted by the Prüfungszentrale des Deutschen Volkshochschul-Verbandes (DVV). One of the main points on the agenda was the extension of level-descriptions beyond the Council of Europe's Threshold.

The Waystage and Threshold specifications have had a significant influence on the examinations produced by members of ALTE, both in the original forms of these documents and the more recent revisions (Waystage and Threshold 1990).

The first two levels of the ALTE Framework of examinations refer explicitly to these documents by name: Waystage User and Threshold User.

Many of the members also have ALTE Level 3 examinations; for example, in German there is the Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP) and in English the First Certificate in English (FCE) which has recently been revised and is due to appear in its revised form in December 1996 (*see table on page 2*).

These examinations are widely taken by candidates throughout the world (with over 250,000 candidates per year for FCE alone) and there was, therefore, considerable interest among ALTE members when the Council of Europe expressed an intention to produce a Level 3 description beyond Threshold. This is currently known as Vantage Level.

As reported in previous issues of ALTE News (December 1994 and January 1996), ALTE is now co-sponsoring this development. In order to keep abreast of the work in progress it was agreed at the meeting in Dublin in November 1995, that the co-authors, John Trim and Jan van Ek, should be invited to Frankfurt to present the current status of their work. Although Jan van Ek was not able to attend, John Trim was able to be at the meeting on 24 April; he presented an overview of the draft Vantage Level document and this was followed by a discussion with the ALTE members.

continued overleaf

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LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS		
LEVEL 1 Waystage User	Catalan	Certificat Internacional de Català, Nivell Bàsic (NB)
	Danish	Test 1
	English	Key English Test (KET)
	German	Grundbaustein Deutsch als Fremdsprache (GBS DaF)
	Irish	Réamhtheastas Gaeilge (RTG)
	Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 1 (CELI 1)
	Luxembourgish	Zertifikat Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (ZLaF)
LEVEL 2 Threshold User	Catalan	Certificat Internacional de Català, Nivell Llindar (NL)
	Danish	Test 2
	English	Preliminary English Test (PET)
	French	Certificat Elémentaire de Français Pratique (CEFP)
	German	Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF)
	Irish	Bunteastas Gaeilge (BTG)
	Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 2 (CELI 2)
	Luxembourgish	Eischten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (1DLaF)
	Portuguese	Certificado de Língua Portuguesa (CELP)
	Spanish	Certificado Inicial de Español (CIE)
LEVEL 3 Independent User	English	First Certificate in English (FCE)
	French	Diplôme de Langue Française (DL)
	German	Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)
	Italian	Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 3 (CELI 3)
	Luxembourgish	Zweten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (2DLaF)
	Spanish	Diploma Básico de Español (DBE)

The ALTE Framework: Levels 1 - 3

In the introduction to his talk, Dr Trim explained that the authors' aim was to provide an objective 'as far above Threshold as Waystage is below it' for those learners who, having reached the point where they had acquired the minimal means needed to transact the business of everyday life and make social contact with those they met in another country, nevertheless wanted to carry their learning of English a stage further. This would not necessarily mean that there were new areas of everyday living left unexplored, but rather that the restricted means available to them for dealing with situations and building personal relations were frustratingly limiting. What was sought was therefore enrichment of the existing objective rather than something altogether new.

The authors therefore adhered to the existing mould for Threshold Level 1990 and Waystage 1990, so as to maintain a coherent progression for the audience, enriching the specification in several ways:

- by refining the functional and general notional categories, with consequent growth in the available inventory of exponents. Among language functions, those concerned with the expression of emotion and the exchange of information and opinion received particular attention.

- an expanded range of specific notions and concrete vocabulary. This presented some problems, since while all learners would wish to consolidate their knowledge of a 'core' vocabulary to deal with the common business of daily living, different learners would wish to develop further in areas relevant to their own lives and interests than in those relevant to other people. There must be scope for differentiation, and there was no question of advocating a definitive word-list. Lexicostatistics might be consulted for core elements, but could not by definition give a guide to options. A solution lay in the specification of areas of concern, with open category lists exemplified by the lexis likely to be of common concern.

- increased range and control of discourse structure and conversational strategies. Whereas Threshold and particularly Waystage offered relatively fixed 'verbal exchange patterns' in which each partner contributed short turns consisting of one or two relatively simple sentences, Vantage learners should be more flexible in dealing with the unexpected, and able to organize longer sequences of somewhat more complex sentences to express meaning more adequately. It should not be forgotten, of course, that complexity for its own sake is no virtue in English, where simplicity is often more effective!

- greater socio-cultural awareness and ability to deal with some important register varieties. Up to Threshold, a neutral register with standard pronunciation and usage was recommended, and it was expected that interlocutors would also avoid excessive formality or familiarity. With increasing experience, Vantage Level learners should be able to deal with a moderate foreign or regional accent as well as with more formal or more colloquial usage according to the nature of the situation, and to some extent modify their own usage accordingly. They should also be aware that the partner's conventions of politeness, etc. might well be different from their own.

- improved reading skills applied to a wider range of texts. Up to Threshold, written texts are confined to public signs and notices, personal and routine correspondence, and magazine or newspaper articles of a basic kind. The learner who goes further is likely to develop wider interests and become an increasingly skilled reader.

Dr Trim concluded by pointing out that, taken together, Waystage, Threshold and Vantage now offer to all practitioners a description of the language needed to assure a learner's ability to deal effectively with the challenges presented by everyday

life, presented at three levels rising from a minimal equipment to deal with the highest priority needs, through the minimum needed to deal with the full range of requirements for a visitor or temporary resident, to an enriched equipment adequate to deal effectively with the complexities of daily living. It is, of course, for the individual user to decide how to make use of this descriptive apparatus, in order to define appropriate objectives for a particular set of learners, whilst of course bearing in mind the need to co-ordinate the efforts of different providers in developing a learning/teaching system. Users can supplement the specification if some needs of the constituency are not met, or cut out elements they do not need. Items which are of marginal value to the learners envisaged can be replaced by others. The process can be articulated into more stages if a particular educational system is organized in a 'drip feed' mode. With courses for non-beginners, the description can be used to specify a prior knowledge requirement as well as the objective. Modules can be derived by concentrating on some defined sub-part of the specification, as can partial competence.

This flexibility is possible because a single model has been used for the successive levels Waystage, Threshold and Vantage. We trust that all those concerned with planning and implementing language teaching and learning will find it useful in setting objectives which are desirable, appropriate, and feasible for the particular learners towards whom they undertake responsibility.

Since the work was carried out to revise the English version of Threshold and Waystage in 1990, the Council of Europe has developed its Common European Framework of Reference for Language Learning and Teaching (reported in ALTE News January 1996). While this has had an influence on the work to develop the new Vantage Level specification, it should be pointed out that the underlying principles are quite distinct. The Common Framework is designed to accommodate differentiation in Europe. It aims to accommodate all objectives and sets out options rather than solutions to teaching or learning contexts. The Threshold and Waystage levels, (and hence the new level), on the other hand, seek to provide a well-defined objective for a given audience, with clear exponents and exemplification which can be used as a basis for syllabus design or test specifications.

An area which has generated much discussion is the proposed name for the new enriched specification. The working title being used by the authors is Vantage Level - a suggestion which caused many of the ALTE members to reach for the nearest English dictionary! On checking the meanings of the word "vantage" it is apparent that, in English at least, there are some useful connotations, especially in relation to learners at an intermediate or "independent" level of competence:

- vantage = advantage;
- favourable or beneficial circumstances;
- something added to something that already exists and thus gives the possessor an advantage;
- vantage-point: place affording a good view.

At the time of writing, this name was still considered to be provisional - some of the possible objections raised by ALTE members include: a) the lack of immediate transparency; and b) the difficulty of finding a suitable equivalent in other European languages.

The final version of the document is due for completion by the end of 1996 and discussion of the final draft will be on the agenda for the next ALTE meeting, which is scheduled to take place in Luxembourg in November.

ALTE members with the Frankfurt skyline in the background

All Aspects of Adult Education: The Volkshochschulen (VHS) in Germany

Wherever you go in Germany, you are never far from the nearest VHS centre. There are more than a thousand of these institutions in the Federal Republic of Germany, with a large number of branches, even in rural areas. There are VHS centres throughout more or less the whole of Germany. More than half of them are run by the local council or borough council, and most of the others are registered associations and supported by municipal corporations. Almost 4,000 academic staff and nearly 200,000 free-lance teachers run an educational programme for adults unrivalled elsewhere in Europe. Each year more than 6 million people attend courses or events at the VHS, which take up more than 15 million teaching hours. No other adult education organization in Germany has such a comprehensive programme, ranging over politics, law, questions of education and psychology, philosophy and religion, literature, art and music, natural science and technology, economics and vocational training, health education and sport, games and design, as well as foreign language training and further vocational training, the last of which, in terms of teaching hours, makes up almost 40% of the VHS programme.

VHS Regional Associations and the DVV

VHS centres carry out their work more or less autonomously and independently, but have joined together into regional associations in order to co-ordinate their programmes and have their interests represented in the individual states. There are 16 of these, the same as the number of states. The regional associations have been linked together since 1953 in the German Association of Volkshochschulen, the Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband (DVV), which is based in Bonn. Its main task, with the aid of a number of committees and departments, is to represent joint interests and plans at a federal level. Three academic institutes in the DVV are concerned with complex special tasks: the Institute for International Co-operation (IIZ) in Bonn; the Adolf Grimme Institute (AGI) in Marl for the field of media; and the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) in Frankfurt, which provides services for the study and practice of adult and further education, and also carries out its own development research.

The German Institute of Adult Education (DIE) in Frankfurt - service institution for further education

The DIE provides a link between the disciplines of the educational science of adult education and related sciences such as sociology and psychology and the practice of further education. It draws up and evaluates models, concepts and research for adult education. The DIE has a literature database on further education which is continually updated and an archive of the programmes of the VHS. It publishes annual statistics on the work of the VHS, and has a comprehensive adult education library for the German-speaking world. The DIE publishes scientific papers and its own journal, and organizes a number of specialist meetings and conferences, as well as further training sessions for those working in adult education. It works on projects and development research related to adult education and develops didactic models for various fields, such as health education, further vocational training, work with senior citizens, women's education, basic education and - last but not least - foreign language learning. In addition to all this, the DIE advises the VHS and other further training organizations on questions of didactics, organizational development, management, and the setting up and extension of course programmes.

Objectivity and Ensuring Quality: the Examinations Office of the DVV

The first examinations in English in the Federal Republic of Germany were run by the VHS in 1968. With the financial support of the Federal Ministry of Education and Science, the initial steps were taken towards a comprehensive certification programme which - in the field of languages as well as in that of natural sciences and technology - has gained recognition and spread throughout Europe. In 1972 the Examinations Office of the DVV was set up in order to run the central organization connected with the examinations and affiliated to the DIE.

At present the Examinations Office offers 37 different examinations. Of these, 27 are in foreign languages (for both

general and occupational purposes) and 10 are in the field of natural sciences and technology, including information science. The DVV is also represented through the Examinations Office, and with the examinations in German as a Foreign Language (Stage One and Certificate), in the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE).

The examinations offered by the Examinations Office are geared strictly to learning objectives and standardized test models, which have in general been developed by the DIE and its specialist departments, and are laid down and published in inventories of learning objectives. The organization and running of the examinations is centralized in order to:

- ensure that the learning objectives are adhered to by means of centralized setting of tasks;
- provide equivalent examination conditions everywhere;
- establish identical marking criteria for candidates' work, wherever the examination takes place.

By these means, the Examinations Office achieves a high standard of objectivity and comparability between examinations. At the same time, this contributes to the quality of the examinations and the quality of teaching in the VHS.

Materials Writing and Test Construction

The Examinations Office regularly issues contracts for new tests to specialists and working groups, co-ordinates the appraisal of these by experts, guides the activities of the relevant specialist committees, and carries out the necessary trialling of tests. This process culminates in the design and printing of test papers.

Item Banking

The Examinations Office maintains stores of used test tasks and test batteries. This takes into account both the great quantitative and qualitative need for such test elements, and also helps to rationalize the high-cost area of test construction.

Organization and Supervision of Examinations

At present about 3,000 institutions in Germany and abroad are registered with the Examinations Office. The central organization of the examinations comprises mainly:

- the setting and arranging of examination dates;
- the work connected with registration for the examinations;
- the despatch of examination material to the examining institutions, examiners and markers;
- the co-ordination of groups of markers.

Marking and Analysis of Examinations

After the examinations have taken place, candidates' answer sheets are returned to the Examinations Office and marked there. The Examinations Office then calculates candidates' results, compiles written evaluations and certificates, carries out studies of the examination material returned (item analysis), and compiles statistics on the examinations.

Examination Archives

The Examination Regulations oblige the Examinations Office to maintain an archive of candidate examination details, which makes it possible to issue duplicates of certificates at any time, and also to carry out scientific surveys.

Research-Related Tasks

As a result of its complex activities, the Examinations Office is able to provide a valuable service to researchers. It keeps secure data for test evaluation and test revision and provides data on the candidate structure of examinations. As well as this, it also carries out its own research, developing and trialling new methods for the evaluation and organization of examinations.

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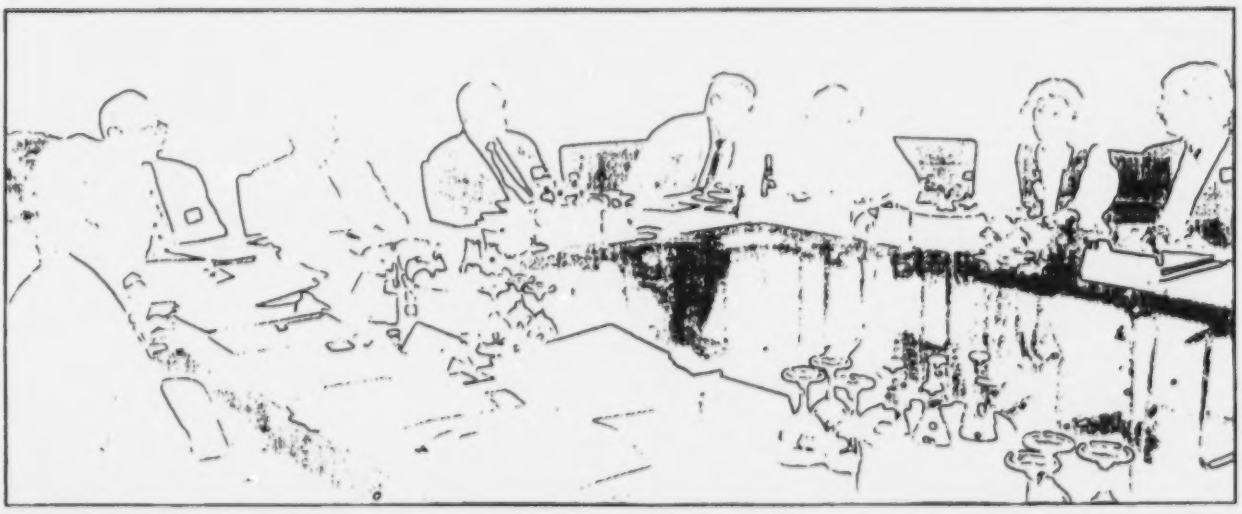
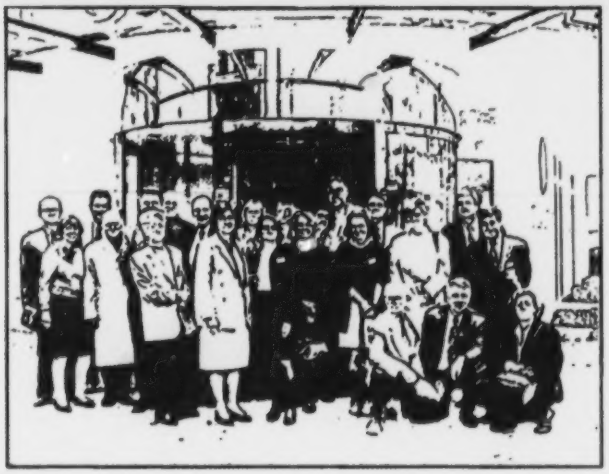


A plenary session during the conference, chaired by Hans-Dieter Teichmann (DVV)



ALTE members at their hotel

Examination Preparation Material

Each examination offered by the Examinations Office is accompanied by at least the following:

- a detailed inventory of learning objectives;
- a mock examination (in practice there are usually several of these).

In addition, the Examinations Office offers a range of other supplementary materials for use in courses. The current catalogue of publications consists of more than 300 titles.

As a complement to these areas, the Examinations Office also trains examiners and markers or gives assistance with this training, issues information for examiners and markers, and provides constant advice on curricular and examination matters. As its work is financed through the sale of its services, it must naturally also carry out advertising and PR work for its programme to an increasing extent; in other words, it engages in comprehensive marketing activities.

For further information contact Hans-Dieter Teichmann or Heinrich Ruebeling at the DVV, Frankfurt, Tel: 49-69-154005-141, Fax: 49-69-590195, e-mail: ruebeling@em.uni-frankfurt.de.

New Applicants to ALTE

Two presentations were made to the meeting by representatives of organizations which are currently applying for membership of ALTE. Associate Professor Jon Erik Hagen of the Department of Scandanavian Languages and Literature, University of Bergen, gave a talk on the tests of Norwegian as a Foreign Language, while Dr Maisa Martin of the University of Jyväskylä presented tests of Finnish. Summaries of these presentations follow.

Tests of Norwegian as a Foreign Language

The National Tests in Norwegian as a Second Language are offered by the University of Bergen in co-operation with "Folkuniversitetet i Norge", the leading adult education organization in Norway. The University of Bergen is responsible for test construction, rating and validation, while the role of the "Folkuniversitetet" is one of administering tests and providing information to the public.

The two tests offered are at different levels, and are known as The Higher Level Test and the Intermediate Level Test respectively. The former is for candidates with a non-Norwegian educational background who intend to enrol on academic courses at a Norwegian university or pursue professional careers in Norway. Both of these groups have a need for documentation of their general language proficiency at a general and academic level, and for this purpose the 'Bergen Test', the name by which the Higher Level Test is popularly known, is recognized by all universities and other institutions of higher education in Norway, as well as by the Ministry of Education.

The Higher Level Test was constructed in order to meet the increasing demand from immigrants and refugees to Norway to have their command of the Norwegian language assessed and documented. The basis for the construction of the test was the traditional matriculation examination at the University of Bergen, known as the 'Level Three Exam'. This is a traditional language exam, or achievement test, closely linked to the instruction given in the language courses used when preparing for it. Under the influence of the Council of Europe's publications on language learning and testing, as well as various existing tests of English, the structure and content of this exam have been modified and adapted to fit the needs of candidates who have not participated in such courses, and it is currently intended to function as a language proficiency test for general and academic professional purposes.

The Higher Level Test was offered for the first time in 1988, and is currently administered three times a year at 11 locations throughout the country. It is taken by approximately 1,000 candidates each year.

In content and structure, the Higher Level Test consists of subtests designed to measure detailed and global reading and listening comprehension skills, as well as written production. Unfortunately, due to prohibitive costs, it is, for the time being, not feasible to offer a subtest of oral production to all candidates, so the general test score does not reflect this particular skill. A separate test of oral production has been constructed and is regularly administered, but this is currently available to prospective medical students and medical practitioners only.

The Intermediate Level Test is a test of everyday non-academic and non-specific general language ability, and is intended to

correspond approximately to Threshold Level. Candidates for this test have usually followed the Norwegian language courses arranged and financed by the Norwegian government, and Intermediate Level will in future function as a compulsory test used on these courses.

The structure of the Intermediate Level Test is similar to that of Higher Level, and the subtests follow the same pattern, but there are some important differences. The type of subject matter chosen for use in texts is necessarily different, as the target candidate group for the Intermediate Level Test is non-academic, and, in contrast to the Higher Level Test, Intermediate Level includes a face-to-face subtest of oral production as an integrated part of its battery.

This test is administered three times a year at 51 locations, and will be taken by approximately 5,000 candidates this year.

An attempt is made to ensure the reliability and validity of new subtests at both levels by the implementation of pretesting routines. These involve comparing test scores and item responses for the new test with similar scores on previous tests by administering both to students at the University of Bergen. From time to time, students from several universities in Norway who are taking the Level Three Exam also take the Bergen Test in order to ensure some measure of concurrent validity, but more systematic external validation of the tests is needed, and further validation projects are planned. Some theoretical aspects of the tests have been addressed in several MA theses, and doctoral projects related to the tests are also planned.

A group of four people under the leadership of divisional manager Reidun Oanaes Andersen are engaged in working on these tests on a full-time basis, and hundreds of people are involved in some capacity in each administration of the tests. The test group reports to a national advisory board on which universities, public institutions and adult education centres are represented. The infrastructure of test administration in its early stages has been somewhat problematic, but it is gradually being developed.

An important short-term task for the future is to develop the tests further, and to step up the attempt to investigate validity and reliability with an eye to improving and revising the tests, as well as solving the administrative and financial problems involved. In the long run, however, the most important challenge is to raise the level of professionalism of all aspects of language testing in Norway, both as a scientific discipline and with respect to such issues as teacher training and the recruitment of markers and administrative personnel at all levels.

In this context, ALTE membership will be an invaluable asset, and the resources and stimulus represented by ALTE will provide the catalyst necessary to give impetus to this process.

User's Guide for Examiners

In April 1996 a User's Guide for Examiners was produced for the Education Committee of the Council of Europe's Council for Cultural Co-operation. The Guide is based on some sections of the materials prepared by ALTE for the guidance of test item writers, as part of a project funded by the Council of Europe Lingua programme.

The purpose of the Guide is to help anyone who is involved in preparing language tests, particularly if they wish to make use of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of reference for language learning and teaching. It is aimed not only at those whose work is wholly concerned with testing, such as test constructors engaged in producing state examinations, but also at teachers who need to devise tests for their own classroom or school.

The Guide is therefore to be interpreted according to the needs of the individual reader, and there is an emphasis on sound processes and clear principles as the prerequisites for the production of good tests. The Guide begins with a brief summary of the development of a communicative view of language, a view exemplified in the Council of Europe's Threshold and Waystage level publications. The main focus of this approach is on language as it is used to serve practical needs for communication in a variety of areas related to work and personal life. A communicative view of language goes hand-in-hand with a model of communicative competence, which the language tester needs in order to define what is to be tested. The Framework offers a model which allows testers in many different situations and with different needs to operate on a basis of shared values and standards in testing.

The central part of the Guide is taken up by an outline of the entire process of test development, starting with the perception of the need for a new test and the various considerations and constraints which influence test design. This is followed by a detailed description of how test materials are produced, and of the stages they would normally be expected to go through before appearing on a test paper. The considerations which influence the selection of texts and choice of task and item types are described, and issues such as the level of difficulty of materials and the use of authentic texts are addressed. The various ways of marking and rating both objective items and the more subjective task types are summarized. The final section deals with the evaluation of tests and emphasizes their capacity to have far-reaching educational and social impact.

It is hoped that the User's Guide will serve both to offer a summary of key pointers towards successful testing, and to lead those interested in the subject to make full use of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework.

The National Foreign Language Certificate in Finnish

Finland is officially a bilingual country, with Finnish being spoken as a first language by 92.9% of the 5.1 million inhabitants, while Swedish is spoken by 5.8%. Other languages, spoken mainly by immigrants, account for approximately 1.3%. All speakers of Finnish are taught some Swedish, while speakers of Swedish and other languages learn Finnish at school, as well as English and other foreign languages. Achievement tests in Finnish as a Second Language, based on the school curriculum, have existed since 1843, when Finnish first became a school subject. The most important of these tests is the National Matriculation Examination, which takes place at the end of secondary school.

The need for functional tests in Finnish emerged with the rapid increase in immigration to Finland in the early 1990s. The National Foreign Language Certificate in Finnish was created in order to provide immigrants and other speakers of Finnish as a Second or Foreign Language with an opportunity to receive an official assessment of their language skills. The certificate is part of a general framework within which tests in several languages are developed and organized jointly by the University of Jyväskylä and the National Board of Education. Tests can be taken each November and April at certified educational institutions all over Finland.

The tests are based on an eight-level scale of language proficiency. The basic level test covers skill levels 1-3, the intermediate levels 3-5, and the advanced levels 5-8. The same topic categories - personal identification, home and lifestyle, work, society, environment and geography, personal relationships, everyday life, travel, health and well-being - are used at all levels. The same applies to the language functions covered - giving and asking for information, expressing a point of view, expressing and asking about emotions and attitudes, communication management (e.g. requesting, suggesting, warning), acting according to social norms and customs and communication strategies (e.g. elaboration, backchannelling). At present all tests measure general language skills only, but it is possible that modules in Language for Special Purposes may be made available at the advanced level in future.

The test consists of five subtests: reading, writing, listening, speaking, and vocabulary and structure. All speaking tests are audio-taped, and at the advanced level the performance of candidates in oral tests is video taped. Each subtest is assessed on the eight-level scale and the separate marks recorded on the certificate, in addition to the general level of proficiency. The certificate also includes a verbal description of the language proficiency profile. Definitions of the proficiency levels 1-8 are printed on the back of each certificate.

Test development is based on regular meetings of test writers and assessors, together with the development team at the University of Jyväskylä. Assessors receive an initial training in two one to two-day sessions, and are required to participate in follow-up sessions. Some 20 to 30% of the lower level tests and all of the advanced level tests are double-marked. As Finland is a small country, there is also a great deal of casual contact and co-operation between examiners, for example telephone discussions of test performance. Benchmark examples of performance for writing and speaking (on video) are also used in examiner training for fixing standards. Statistics on candidate and assessor performance are routinely produced. A number of research projects have been initiated, but little in the way of published results is currently available.

Further information in English can be obtained from a booklet entitled The Framework of the Finnish Foreign Language Certificate, published in 1995 by the National Board of Education (to order, contact fax: +358 0 7747 7475).

Recent publications:

Studies in Language Testing

Series editor : Michael Milanovic

UCLES/CUP

An investigation into the comparability of two tests of English as a foreign language: The Cambridge-TOEFL comparability study

Lyle F. Bachman, F. Davidson, K. Ryan, I-C. Choi

ISBN 0 521 481 67 8 hard cover
0 521 484 67 7 paperback

Test taker characteristics and test performance: A structural equation modeling approach

Antony John Kunnan

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ALTE NEWS

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DEVELOPING LANGUAGE TESTS

A User's Guide for Examiners

Since 1990, ALTE membership has grown steadily so that there are now 18 institutional members, representing 15 European languages. This membership represents a broad base of language testing experts across Europe and collectively provides examinations for a large constituency of language test takers in Europe and throughout the world. Because of this prominent position, ALTE has been able to make contributions to a number of Council of Europe projects, including preparation of a supplementary document to the Common European Framework of reference for language learning and teaching, which is intended for people involved in language test development. This document currently has the working title 'User's Guide for Examiners'; it was briefly described in the last ALTE newsletter (July 1996) and this article sets out to provide a fuller and more detailed description of the rationale and content.

A communicative view of language

The Council of Europe's Framework is a natural development from earlier work carried out by the Council. It is based on a number of projects which have been highly influential world-wide and have gained general acceptance in the language professions. These included the Threshold Level (van Ek, 1975; van Ek and Trim, 1990), a manifestation of the communicative approach which has had a widespread and lasting effect on classroom practice and test design. The Preface to the 1980 edition of Threshold Level English recommends a functional approach to language teaching in order to 'convert language teaching from structure-dominated scholastic sterility into a vital medium for the freer movement of people and ideas'; the main focus of this approach is on language in practical use, as it serves the daily personal needs of an adult living in a foreign country.

Since Threshold was first published, a number of models of communicative competence have been put forward. Perhaps the best known model is the one proposed by Canale and Swain (1981), which subdivided communicative competence into four components - grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence. In the late 1980s Bachman (1990) presented his first comprehensive view of communicative language ability (CLA), which clearly grew

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out of the work of Canale and Swain. He suggested that CLA consists of language knowledge or competence combined with the ability to execute that competence in appropriate language use.

A model of language ability is of importance to the language tester because it provides a useful basis for defining the area of competence to be tested. Having a clear idea of what is being tested is a prerequisite for being able to decide whether or not a test is valid (i.e. whether it actually tests what it claims to test); it also makes it possible to develop practical tools for the item writer or test constructor, such as checklists for test content. The overall purpose of any form of language testing is to sample the language abilities of candidates in such a way that a realistic representation of their degree of skill in using language in non-test situations is provided.

The current Common European Framework (reported in ALTE News Vol.4 No.2, January 1996) also contains a model of language ability. Its essence may be presented as a statement about the nature of communicative competence: communicative competence (sociolinguistic, linguistic, pragmatic) is a form of general competence that leads to language activity (interaction, production, reception, mediation) using tasks, texts and strategies in four principal domains (public, occupational, educational, personal) in which arise situations, consisting of locations, containing organisations that structure interaction, persons with definite roles, objects (animate and inanimate) that constitute an environment, events that take place in it, and operations that are performed.

The Framework offers language test designers and those involved in producing examinations the possibility of moving collectively towards a shared language testing system that is motivated by the core values of the Council's own notion of European citizenship, while at the same time allowing them to retain their own testing traditions and to enhance in them whatever conforms to accepted professional practice. This guide is directly concerned with the immediate task facing examiners, namely the creation of a broad range of tests that have a definite location and identity within the Framework and that also conform to European and international standards of test production.

The purpose of the User's Guide

The User's Guide is designed to help anyone involved with the preparation of language tests, and particularly those wishing to make use of the Framework. The aim has been to make the content of the Guide relevant not only to test constructors preparing tests in a more formal context, such as state examinations, but also to teachers working on school tests. Achieving the correct balance in trying to meet the needs of these two groups has presented something of a challenge.

When ALTE first accepted the Council of Europe's invitation to develop the Guide, two possible approaches to the project were considered. The first approach involved compiling a comprehensive set of exemplar test materials which could act as a template for test developers, enabling them to 'clone' or produce an unlimited number of test tasks of a similar type; in this approach, the focus would have been firmly on the product. The second approach focused less on the final product or outcome, and more on the actual process of test development as a dynamic activity; it was this second approach which was adopted for the project, in the belief that suitable products emerge from clear principles and well-designed processes rather than the other way round.

What are the contents of the User's Guide?

The content of the current draft of the User's Guide (November 1996) is summarised in the contents list page from the Guide shown here:

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1.0 GENERAL INTRODUCTION
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- 1.2 A communicative view of language
- 1.3 A model-based approach to language testing
- 1.4 Other factors influencing language test design

2.0 THE TEST DEVELOPMENT PROCESS
- 2.1 The cyclical nature of the test development process
- 2.2 Developing test specifications
  - 2.2.1 Considerations and constraints
  - 2.2.2 Content, technical and procedural issues
- 2.3 The production process
  - 2.3.1 Commissioning
  - 2.3.2 Vetting and editing
- 2.4 Pretesting and trialling
- 2.5 Test construction
- 2.6 Issues in item-writing
  - 2.6.1 Task design
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  - 2.6.4 Rubrics
  - 2.6.5 Keys, markschemes and rating scales

3.0 EVALUATING TESTS

References and Further Reading

Appendices:
- Appendix 1 Item analysis
- Appendix 2 Glossary

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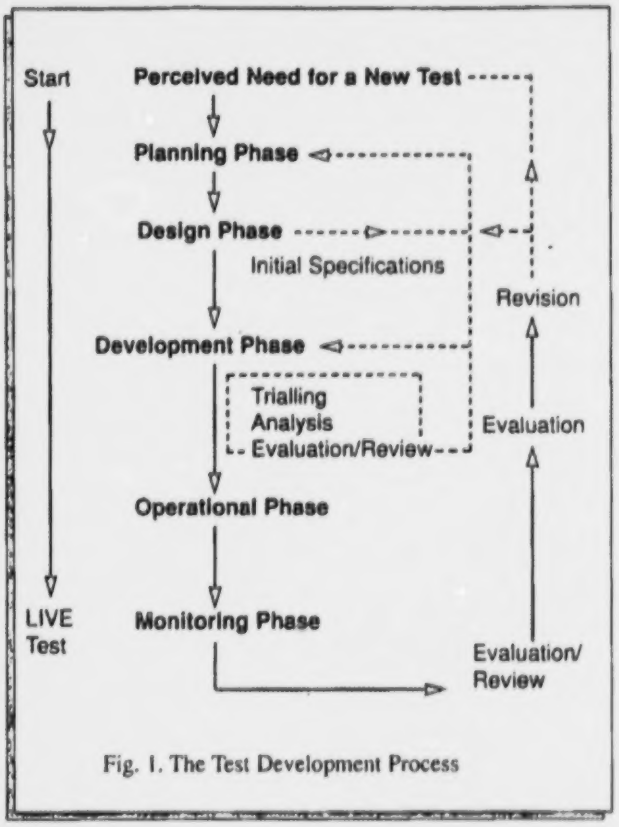


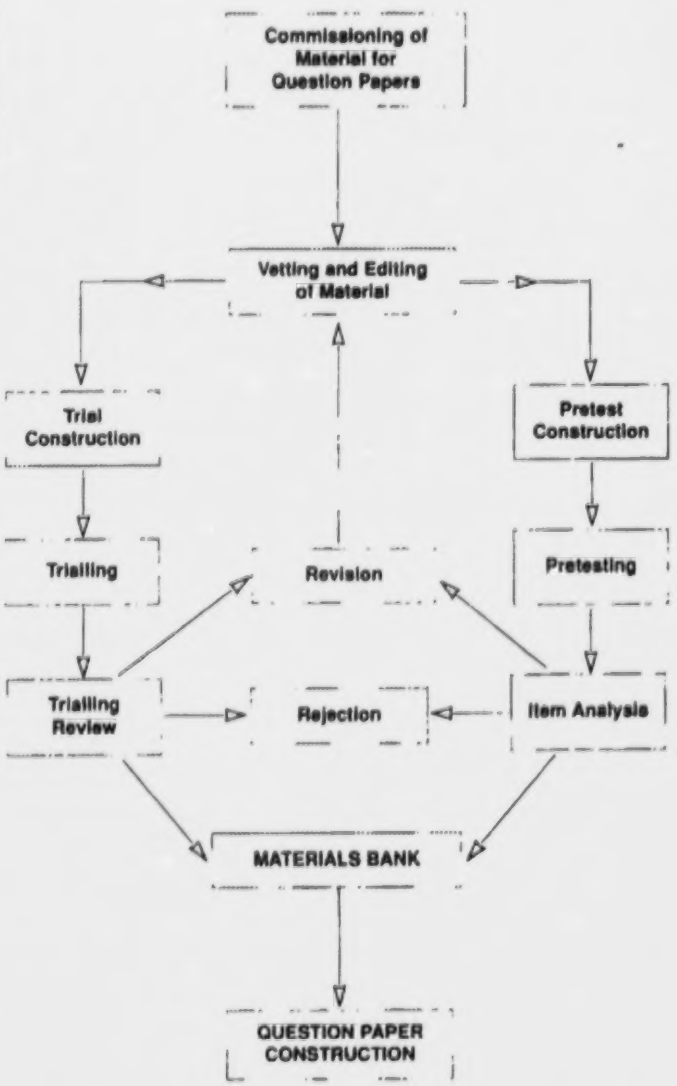
Fig. 1. The Test Development Process

The general introduction section briefly reviews the way in which the communicative view of language has developed over the past 20 years (as noted above) and considers how this view has had a direct impact on approaches to testing language proficiency in recent years. Users of the Guide are encouraged to be aware of the desirability of testing language as communication or social interaction, a view of language which directly reflects the perspective taken in the Council of Europe's Common Framework document. Consideration is also given to the value of adopting a model-based approach to test development, not only in order to describe language ability but also in order to guide the activity of language test design so that a broad range of critical factors can be taken into account and given adequate attention.

The main text of the User's Guide addresses the complex process of test design, development and production. It provides relatively comprehensive guidance on how the various stages of the process can be effectively and efficiently managed, taking into account the many different variables which interact in the testing event, including the social, financial and logistical constraints which may be operating in the local context of test development and management. The Guide presents a model of the test development process (Fig. 1), emphasising its cyclical and iterative nature, in which knowledge and experience gained at each stage is fed back into a continuous reassessment of the test and its administration.

Within this overall context, the Guide discusses in some detail approaches to developing test specifications, to managing the activity of item writers, to engaging in pretesting and trialling of materials, and to constructing live tests. Particular attention is given to the operational phase of test production, and to very practical issues and procedures associated with the writing of test material, such as task design, text selection, and the construction of test rubrics and markschemes (Fig. 2). With regard to measurement issues, the Guide restricts its focus to

Fig. 2. The Test Production Process



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the area considered to be of most practical value, i.e. that of classical item analysis.

The third section of the Guide briefly discusses the nature and importance of test validation, and touches upon approaches to evaluating tests which will ensure that high standards of quality are maintained in every aspect of a test. The Guide also includes a short bibliography containing references to relevant published works on language testing in English, French and German.

Until now relatively little practical guidance in matters relating to test development and management has come from the language testing community in general, and from those who are heavily involved in the business of test development in particular. This Guide has been written by practitioners who are well-established in the field; it has grown out of considerable expertise developed over many years and is the result of a process of reflection on shared experience in over a dozen countries. The target audience for the Guide is to be found among those in over 40 European countries who are faced with the task of language test development and who are likely to be operating in a variety of different contexts and under a range of different constraints. The Guide is designed to be a practical and accessible document which has direct application within the European context and beyond and, for this reason, a series of focus questions has been included at the end of each subsection; these are designed to encourage users to consider how the general principles outlined might be applied in their own context. In addition, a glossary has been included at the back to enhance the transparency of the document; the glossary has been derived from the more comprehensive ALTE glossary (described in ALTE News Vol.4 No.1, June 1995).

In conclusion, the ALTE User's Guide for Examiners is intended as a practical and useful resource for those who face the responsibility of establishing such a system in their particular context. For those interested in obtaining a copy, the final version will be available from the Council of Europe in the course of 1997.

Footnote

A version of this article was presented as a paper at the Language Testing Research Colloquium (LTRC) 1996 in Finland and has been submitted for publication in the proceedings.

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CLL - The Centre de Langues Luxembourg
- an ALTE centre in miniature

In 1981 the Luxembourg Ministry of Education authorised the present Head of the CLL, M. Ernest Wagner, to set up an 'experimental' language school offering two intensive French courses.

Over the following years classes in other languages were added. In a small country like Luxembourg, where people born outside the country make up nearly a third of the population, and where oral and written proficiency in several languages is a social, professional and cultural necessity, there is a very real demand for courses of this type. By the time ten years had gone by, the number of students registering each year had risen to almost a thousand, and the Centre de Langues was no longer regarded as experimental, but had become an established part of the national Adult Education Service.

Today the CLL has almost 1,800 students, and around 100 classes take place every day. Students can choose to study either during the day or in evening classes. French, German, English and Luxembourgish are the most popular choices, but courses in other languages can be made available, as the need arises.

About a third of the CLL's teachers are engaged in teaching their own mother tongue, and those Luxembourgish teachers who give classes in languages other than their own have all studied abroad in a country where that language is spoken. There is a policy, which all teachers have to follow, of teaching solely by means of the language the students are learning; methods involving translation are not used.

In line with the demands of adult and young adult language learners, high priority is given by the CLL to effective systems of teacher training. Both in-service and external training sessions are on offer to the CLL's teachers, and a programme of regular exchanges with teachers in other EU countries provides valuable opportunities for them to experience and assess a range of different teaching techniques and methods.

Taking classes at the CLL means hard work - but it's also fun!

Although the primary aim of the CLL remains the teaching of languages for general and vocational purposes, a secondary but no less important aim is the testing and certification of proficiency both in foreign languages and in Luxembourgish.

The certification of ability to communicate in a foreign language is a complex matter, which necessitates the setting of clear targets and standards. It is important that any certificates awarded should have wide validity and international recognition. With this in mind, the CLL offers its students the opportunity to take many of the examinations provided by other members of ALTE. Examinations set by the Alliance Française, DELF/DALF, the Goethe-Institut, UCLES, Instituto Cervantes, the Università per Stranieri di Perugia and the Nederlandse Taalunie are available, and for most of these organisations, the CLL is the official examinations centre for the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg. This means that not only students of the CLL but any resident of Luxembourg can enter for the exams through the CLL.

Another aspect of the language testing service administered by the CLL concerns certification of proficiency in the Luxembourgish language, a substantial demand for which is created by the high proportion of foreign residents working in Luxembourg. An examinations system based on ALTE criteria has been devised by the CLL, and has Government endorsement under the Ministry of Education.

The suite of four examinations in Luxembourgish ranges from the *Zertifikat Lëtzebuergesch als Friemsprooch* (ZLaF), which is at Waystage level, to the *leweschten Diplom Lëtzebuergesch* (IDL), which is at a level approaching that of someone who has Luxembourgish as a first language. At all levels there are tests of the four skills, reading, writing, listening and speaking. At the three lower levels the test components are individually assessed and certificated: this creates a flexible system, allowing candidates who may be interested, for example, in developing oral/aural skills in the language but who have no need to be able to read or write it, to obtain certificated proof of their proficiency. The highest level diploma, however, involves a compulsory test of all skills.

The introduction of an examinations service at the CLL led to the setting up of a new organisation, '*Langues et Culture asbl*',

Laf Liesverständnes 1. Diplom

Jonktem
Duerfbriedemes

L.1.b.

Lëtzebuerg, de 6. Juni 1995

Un d'Kollege vun der Première 1975
aus dem Lycée Michel-Rodange
Lëtzebuerg

Lëlf Kollegin, léiwe Kolleg,

Virun 20 Joër ware mir zesummen am Lycée! Dat feiere meri Mir treffen eis de 17. Juli um 10 Auer virun eiser aler Schoul.
Den Direkter weist eis deen neien Deel. Mer iessen an der Kantin, wéi fréier! Duerno gi mer an d'Zeltstad e Concert lauschteren. D'Billet-ë kréie mer fir 750 Frang.
Owes um 8 Auer hun ech en Dësch beim Béa Zahlen zu Bëlleg reservéiert. Jidderee wielt, wat e wëllt. D'Spezialitéit vum Haus as Ham, Fritten an Zalot.

Weider Renseignementer kriss du bei mir (Tël. 78 64 56). Wie matgeet, iwwerweist 1.000 Frang op mäi Postcheck-Konto 67 89 70-87, virum 1. Juli. Dat as fir de Concert an d'Iessen an der Kantin.

Ech hoffen, dass du och derbäi bas.

Edith

1. - Wat steet heivun am Text, wiertlech oder sënngemäss?
Kräizt déi richteg Äntwerten un! Et as eng Äntwert pro Fro richteg

1. - Firwat komme se zesummen?	- si waren zesummen an der Schoul	O
	- den Direkter huet e Fest organiséiert	O
	- d'Edith kritt 20 Joër	O
2. - Wat kascht 750 Frang?	- de Concert an d'Iessen zu Bëlleg	O
	- de Concert	O
	- de Concert an d'Méttegiessen	O
3. - Wéini as de Concert fäerdeg?	- um 10 Auer	O
	- um 20 Auer	O
	- dat steet nët am Text	O
4. - Wie kann derbäi sin?	- jiddereen, deen 1.000 Frang bezuelt	O
	- all déi, déi zesummen an der Klass waren	O
	- d'Klassekomeroden, déi d'Geld iwwerweisen	O
5. - Wéi soll een sech umellen?	- et iwwerweist een 1.000 Frang	O
	- et téléfonéiert een dem Edith	O
	- et kënnt een einfach deen Dag bei de Lycée	O

2. - Der kritt och nach d'Geleënheet, einfach ze soe, wat Der verstan hut.

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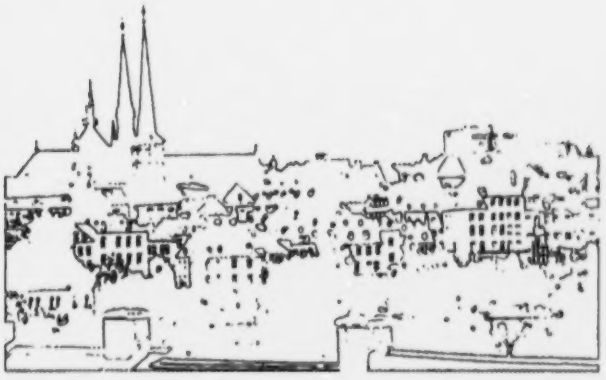
The CLL tests Luxembourgish as a Foreign Language



A view over the old city from a class-room at the CLL

to coordinate and manage the finances of this area of the CLL's work. One of the ongoing aims of this organisation is to make life easier by finding a computer program capable of handling all the diverse exams provided!

Since the establishment of *Langues et Culture asbl* as a separate office within the CLL, the CLL has become a flourishing examinations centre, dealing with up to 2,000 candidates a year. For each language taught, one of the teachers is made responsible for all exam-related matters, while M. Guy Bentner takes overall responsibility for coordinating the examinations service of the CLL.

The organisation of a centre of this kind, at which students can take the language examinations offered by a number of different institutions, is an idea which has often been discussed within ALTE, as a way in which it would be profitable for members to collaborate with one another. The CLL is leading the way in developing this idea of setting up 'ALTE examinations centres' and may well provide a model for other members to follow in setting up examinations centres of their own.

Members of ALTE at the CLL, November 1996

Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal

The Certificate of Dutch as a Foreign Language

The Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal is the latest organisation to become a member of ALTE.

Early history (1970 - 1984)

The history of the CNaVT goes back more than a quarter of a century, to 1970. In that year the board of directors of the IVN, the Internationale Vereniging voor Neerlandistiek (International Association of Dutch Studies) acknowledged the need for formal certification of Dutch language proficiency at universities and other institutions of higher education situated outside the Dutch-speaking region - the Netherlands and the northern half of Belgium (Flanders). As Dutch was a subsidiary subject in most of these institutions, and there was sometimes no official evaluation at the end of a course, students could be left with very little to show for their efforts. A standardised examination with a corresponding certificate was required to remedy this situation. During its fifth colloquium in 1973 the IVN appointed a working group to prepare the ground for such a project and to determine a plan of action. As Dutch is not the language of one nation, but the common standard language of fifteen million Dutch people and six million Belgians, the working group strongly advised a bi-governmental approach. This was facilitated by the existence since 1946 of a cultural treaty between Belgium and the Netherlands, which included in its terms provision for regular consultation between the two countries regarding the spelling of the Dutch language. Negotiations with the relevant governmental bodies in both countries resulted in the establishment in 1975 of the Certificaat Nederlands als Vreemde Taal, financed by subsidies from the Belgian Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs and the Dutch Ministry of Education and Science. Suitable accommodation for the CNaVT was provided by the francophone Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL) at Louvain-la-Neuve, in the French-speaking region of Belgium. It is situated only a short distance across the linguistic border between Dutch and French that divides Belgium into a Dutch-speaking area in the north (Flanders - population six million), and a French-speaking area in the south (Wallonia - population four and a half million, of whom about 70,000 are German-speaking). The CNaVT became part of the Dutch Department of the UCL and the members of the Dutch-Flemish staff are employees of the university.

The examination can be taken at three different levels. These were developed consecutively by the staff at Louvain-la-Neuve. The lowest level (*Elementaire Kennis*) became operational in 1977, the intermediate level (*Basiskennis*) in 1980 and the advanced level (*Uitgebreide Kennis*) in 1984. These tests are at present in the process of being placed on the ALTE Framework, and it is expected that they will be confirmed as being at Levels One, Three and Five respectively.

The Dutch Language Union and the CNaVT

In 1980 the Dutch Language Union was created by a treaty between the Netherlands and Belgium. The idea behind it was to strengthen the international position of the Dutch language by creating an infrastructure for a joint language policy. It aims at integrating The Netherlands and the Flemish (Dutch-speaking) community in Belgium in all fields concerning the Dutch language, including language teaching both within and outside the language region, and literature.

The Dutch Language Union consists of a number of bodies, each with proportional Dutch and Flemish representation. Since the federalisation of Belgium, Flanders has had its own government. This Flemish government has taken over the responsibilities stipulated in the Language Union Treaty from the former national government of Belgium. Within the DLU the ultimate decision-making power rests with the Committee of Ministers, consisting of the Ministers for Education and Culture of The Netherlands and Flanders. Two thirds of the Language Union budget is provided by The Netherlands and one third by Flanders.

In 1985 the CNaVT came under the auspices of the Dutch Language Union and since then has received its yearly subsidy from this organisation. The staff has remained located in the Dutch Department of the Université Catholique de Louvain. The DLU has created an official 'CNaVT Working Group', consisting of experts in relevant fields concerning the Dutch language, which has a monitoring and advisory function. The staff at Louvain-la-Neuve is known as the 'Projectgroup CNaVT'. It is responsible for the necessary research (foreign language acquisition, test theory, etc.) and the composition of the examinations, and also carries out the administrative organisation.

Test content and administration

For the three levels (*Elementaire Kennis, Basiskennis, and Uitgebreide Kennis*) the four skills model of language proficiency has been adopted. There are separate subtests for reading, listening, writing and speaking. With the addition of some testing of 'structural competence' (grammar and vocabulary), this is the pattern adopted by most members of ALTE. All tests are fully standardised, direct proficiency tests and are course independent. The tests for reading and listening consist of multiple choice items. The listening test at the intermediate level also contains a partial dictation. For the productive skills, writing and speaking, a combination of test formats is used. For writing, for example, closed test formats such as a c-test, a multiple choice grammar test and a cloze test are included in addition to more open, direct writing tasks such as guided letters and essays.

The complete examination for a specific level (consisting of the four subtests) may be taken, or alternatively one or more of the component parts. Administration takes place once a year in the first two weeks of May, when the question papers are sent to local examination centres. In 1996, 263 centres in 39 countries all over the world administered the exams to a total of 3,163 candidates. One third of these candidates came from the French-speaking part of Belgium, one in ten was Indonesian or German, and 15% came from France, England and Italy. After the examination, answer sheets (including the oral tests, which are recorded on audio-cassettes) are sent to Louvain-la-Neuve, where they are marked centrally.

Marking and certification

Success in all four skills at a particular level qualifies the candidate to receive a 'complete certificate'. For success in one, two or three of the particular skills, a 'partial certificate' is awarded. For each skill concerned, the complete or partial certificate indicates one of the following grades: *zeer goed* (very good), *goed* (good), *ruim voldoende* (satisfactory) or *voldoende* (pass). In the case of failure in one or several parts of the examination, this/these part(s) may be taken again at a subsequent session (not necessarily the next one). Four partial certificates at the same level may be exchanged for a complete certificate.

The objective tests are mechanically marked. For marking the open tasks for the productive skills, the CNaVT trains a team of markers to use detailed marking scales pertaining to different aspects of these skills (grammar, use of vocabulary, spelling and fluency are assessed on a scale, e.g. 0 - 4). Up until 1996 the pass marks were not fixed but were set each year on the basis of statistical data such as mark distribution, correlations, classical item analysis, etc., in combination with a content analysis of the tests and taking into account the continuity of scores over different years.

As from 1997, fixed pass marks will be used. Internal equivalence from year to year will be established on the basis of item response theory, more specifically a variant of the Rasch Model, with the use of anchor-items (items with known measurement characteristics for difficulty and reliability) to ensure that the same norm is applied for exams in successive years.

The practical value of a Certificate of Dutch as a Foreign Language

The Certificaat Nederlands serves as proof of a specific level of proficiency in Dutch. It is of use to those looking for employment in The Netherlands or Belgium and to prospective students seeking admission to universities or other institutes of Higher Education (colleges, polytechnics, and so forth) in the Low Countries. Qualified teachers from abroad are allowed to teach in The Netherlands only after obtaining a Certificaat Nederlands. Furthermore, in 1996 the Committee of Ministers of the Nederlandse Taalunie officially assigned equal value to the CNaVT *Basiskennis* and the diploma of the Nederlandse Staatsexamen *NT2 Programma I*, and to the CNaVT *Uitegebreide Kennis* and the diploma of the Nederlandse Staatexamen *NT2 Programma II*. Laws and regulations in The Netherlands and in Dutch-speaking Belgium have been adapted accordingly, and teaching institutions and employers are explicitly advised to bring their admission and hiring policies into line with this new state of affairs.

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The Revised ALTE Framework

At the ALTE meeting recently held in Stockholm, a new version of the Framework of Levels on which members' examinations are placed was produced. The Framework has been updated to include the tests of a number of organisations which have recently become members of ALTE and to place the examinations at the higher levels. It is reproduced on page 2 of this newsletter as a Framework at five levels.

ALTE members are now working on the final stages of the Framework project, which involves the validation of sets of 'can-do' statements produced at an earlier stage in the project. This stage is being coordinated by Dr Neil Jones of UCLES.

The project has two main objectives, which are:

a) to translate and adapt into the relevant languages various materials produced by ALTE at an earlier stage: 'can-do' statements, checklists for evaluating tests, item writer training materials and (for some of the group) the multilingual glossary of testing terms;

b) to develop specifications for a 'breakthrough' level of language learning.

For further information, contact Sophia Papaefthymiou-Lytra.

News from Members

In addition to collaboration on the Framework project, members of ALTE are engaged, either individually or in smaller groupings, in a variety of projects and programmes of work related to language testing. Reports from the members on some of these follow.

UNIVERSITY OF ATHENS

The University of Athens is acting as coordinator for a two-year project funded by the Socrates Lingua D programme, involving some of the less widely taught languages, the Finnish, Irish, Norwegian, Greek and Swedish members of ALTE – to be known as the FINGS group.

UNIVERSITY OF BERGEN

Demand for the University of Bergen's two tests in Norwegian as a Foreign Language is growing. In 1996 there were 1,000 candidates for the higher level test and 5,000 for the intermediate test.

The government has decided that the intermediate level test will in future be compulsory for all foreigners attending publicly-funded Norwegian language courses. At a later date a recommended minimum test score for entrance to the national education system and the labour market will be set. The advantage of this institutionalisation of the intermediate test is that it will provide a secure financial basis for future activities.

continued overleaf

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LANGUAGE EXAMINATIONS

LEVEL 1 Waystage User	LEVEL 2 Threshold User	LEVEL 3 Independent User	LEVEL 4 Competent User	LEVEL 5 Good User
Català Certificat Internacional de Català, Nivell Bàsic (NB)	**Català** Certificat Internacional de Català, Nivell Llindar (NL)	-	-	-
Dansk Test 1	**Dansk** Test 2	-	**Dansk** Dansk prøve 2	-
Deutsch Grundbaustein Deutsch als Fremdsprache (GBS DaF)	**Deutsch** Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache (ZDaF)	-	**Deutsch** Zentrale Mittelstufenprüfung (ZMP)	**Deutsch** Zentrale Oberstufenprüfung (ZOP) Kleines Deutsches Sprachdiplom (KDS)
English Key English Test (KET)	**English** Preliminary English Test (PET)	**English** First Certificate in English (FCE)	**English** Certificate in Advanced English (CAE)	**English** Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE)
-	**Español** Certificado Inicial de Español (CIE)	**Español** Diploma Básico de Español (DBE)	-	**Español** Diploma Superior de Español (DSE)
Français Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 1 (CEFP1)	**Français** Certificat d'Etudes de Français Pratique 2 (CEFP2)	**Français** Diplôme de Langue Française (DL)	**Français** Diplôme Supérieur d'Etudes Françaises Modernes (DS)	**Français** Diplôme de Hautes Etudes Françaises (DHEF)
Gaeilge Réamhteastas Gaeilge (RTG)	**Gaeilge** Bunteastas Gaeilge (BTG)	-	-	-
-	**Greece** Veveosi Elinomathias	-	-	-
Italiano Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 1 (CELI 1)	**Italiano** Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 2 (CELI 2)	**Italiano** Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 3 (CELI 3)	**Italiano** Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 4 (CELI 4)	**Italiano** Certificato di Conoscenza della Lingua Italiana, Livello 5 (CELI 5)
Letzebuergesch Zertifikat Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (ZLaF)	**Letzebuergesch** Eischten Diplom Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (1DLaF)	**Letzebuergesch** Zweten Diplom Letzebuergesch als Friemsprooch (2DLaF)	**Letzebuergesch** -	**Letzebuergesch** Ieweschten Diplom Letzbuergesch (IDL)
-	**Nederlands** Niveau Elementaire Kennis (CNaVT)	**Nederlands** Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen I (NT2-I) Niveau Basiskennis (CNaVT)	**Nederlands** Staatsexamen Nederlands als Tweede Taal, Examen II (NT2-II) Niveau Uitgebreide Kennis (CNaVT)	-
-	**Norsk** Språkprøven i norsk for fremmedspråklige voksne	-	**Norsk** Test i norsk for fremmedspråklige Høyere nivå	-
-	**Português** Certificado de Língua Portuguesa (CELP)	-	**Português** Diploma de Língua Portuguesa (DILP)	-
Suomi Yleiset kielitutkinnot, Perustaso 1	**Suomi** Yleiset kielitutkinnot, Perustaso 2-3, Keskitaso 3	**Suomi** Yleiset kielitutkinnot, Keskitaso 4-5, Ylin taso 5	**Suomi** Yleiset kielitutkinnot, Ylin taso 6	**Suomi** Yleiset kielitutkinnot, Ylin taso 7-8
-	-	**Svenska** Rikstestet (RT) Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS)	**Svenska** Rikstestet (RT) Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS)	**Svenska** Rikstestet (RT) Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS)

This move has not as yet been followed by an increase in funding for language instruction, which is at present limited to a maximum of 500 hours instruction per student.

It is hoped, however, that in the not too distant future the target for language attainment will be based on level rather than on hours of instruction. In theory this will involve giving each student – free of charge – as much instruction as he or she needs in order to reach the recommended minimum score mentioned above.

One expected result of this is that the number of candidates will rise during the next few years, and the infrastructure has been developed to a point where it is possible to arrange a national meeting with all evaluators once a year.

The test materials are increasingly used by second language research students at MA, and, in the near future, doctorate level. They are used by students writing theses on issues relating to validity and reliability, and also by people working on matters relating to second language acquisition, including grammar, vocabulary and pragmatic issues relating to discourse and text structures.

For further information, contact Jon Erik Hagen.

The Norwegian Parliament has recently passed a resolution which will bring this plan into effect from 1 January 1998.

CITO

Recent developments in exams in Dutch as a Second Language

Numbers of candidates for both Staatsexamen I and Staatsexamen II have risen dramatically. In 1992 there were a little over 1,000 candidates for either exam. In 1996 the figures were 17,518 for NT2-I and 24,399 for NT2-II, with a further 6,000 taking at least one of the components of NT2-I and 7,000 doing the same for NT2-II.

A second set of sample papers for the tests was published during 1996. There has been one minor change to the Speaking component of NT2-II: there is now one extensive speaking test instead of two.

In future, changes in the system of adult education in The Netherlands may result in the exams being administered at two levels, and by the schools themselves. A problem still to be resolved concerns the two distinct target populations – candidates who are highly qualified and those with lesser qualifications.

Research

Research into the equivalence of the tests of Dutch as a Second Language and the Certificate in Dutch as a Foreign Language (CNaVT) produced at the Université Catholique de Louvain under the auspices of the Dutch Language Union, has shown that the

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Members of ALTE at their meeting in Stockholm, April 1997

performance level of candidates for NT2-I is lower than had been thought. It is equivalent to CNaVT Elementary Level (Elementaire Kennis). NT2-II has been shown to be on the same level as CNaVT Advanced Level (Uitgebreide Kennis).

Research into Listening has taken place in two areas. Firstly, a study of the performance of native speakers on Listening components of the NT2 tests shows that they attain higher scores than non-native speakers. Secondly, some research has taken place into tasks requiring candidates to demonstrate understanding of text structure. Findings suggest that these tasks do not test the same skill as traditional Listening test items, and, as a result of this, they will not be used in future tests. Various item formats are currently being studied, with a view to increasing test validity.

For further information, contact Marie-Christine Sprengers.

DANISH LANGUAGE TESTING CONSORTIUM

The Danish Consortium now has four partners:

The Institut for Nordisk Filologi, University of Copenhagen
Studieskolen, Copenhagen
The Danish Refugee Council, Copenhagen
The Ministry of Education, Department of Adult Education

The main contact address remains:

Danish Language Testing Consortium
Institut for Nordisk Filologi
Njalsgade 80
Copenhagen S
Denmark

DEUTSCHER VOLKSHOCHSCHUL-VERBAND (DVV)

Last autumn the Examinations Office of the DVV moved to new offices and can now be contacted at Hansaallee 150, D-60320, Frankfurt, Germany.

At the moment the DVV is actively involved in revising the syllabus and format of all its Threshold level tests. The revision is being carried out at the DVV's institute, the German Institute for Adult Education (Deutsches Institut für Erwachsenenbildung, usually referred to as the DIE), and work on the Threshold level test Deutsch als Fremdsprache is being done in close collaboration with the Goethe-Institut. The DVV hopes to be able to launch the new-style tests in the spring of 1999.

A new structure for the DVV is currently under discussion. This change would mean that the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) becomes a separate legal entity from the German Adult Education Association (DVV). These changes are accompanied by the establishment of a new separate legal structure for the Examinations Office of the DVV, which provides tests for adult learners in many other areas of study, such as electronic data processing, as well as in language.

Any queries on the work of the DVV should be addressed to the Examinations Office at the above address.

For further information, contact Heinrich Ruebeling.

GENERALITAT DE CATALUNYA

Some minor changes to the Reading and Listening components of Nivell Bàsic and to the Use of Language component of Nivell Llindar have recently been made. Candidate numbers for 1996 stand at 173 for Nivell Bàsic and 182 for Nivell Llindar.

In 1996 work began on developing a new test of Catalan, which will be placed at level three of the ALTE Framework. This test is currently in the design phase, and ALTE checklists and 'can-do' statements are being drawn on for this. The draft version of Vantage level is also proving helpful. Next year the test will move into its development phase, with trialling, evaluation of the results of this, and review of the design. It will go live for the first time in 1999.

The project for the development of this new test has been submitted to the European Commission actions which give support in promoting and safeguarding regional or minority languages and cultures (DG XXII: Education, Training and Youth).

For further information, contact Marta Xirinachs i Codina.

GOETHE-INSTITUT

The examination in German as a Foreign Language at Level 2, the Zertifikat Deutsch als Fremdsprache, is currently being revised by the DVV in collaboration with the Goethe-Institut. Test materials in the following format (see page 4) will be pretested in the summer of 1997.

Starting in August 1997, the results of pretesting will be analysed. In addition to this statistical analysis of the new model, a comparison will be made of the results achieved by the same candidates in these

Reading comprehension	Text type	Item type
1. Understanding gist	5 short authentic texts	10 matching
2. Understanding detail	1-2 authentic texts	10 true/false or 5mc
3. Understanding specific points	12 advertisements	10 matching
4. Vocabulary	1 medium length text	10 gaps with mc or multiple matching
5. Grammar	a fax or letter	
Listening comprehension		
1. Understanding gist	5 short interviews on one topic	5mc
2. Understanding specific points	announcements or telephone conversations	5 true/false
3. Understanding detail	conversation or interview	10 true/false

Writing
Writing a letter of about 200 words. Four guiding points are given.
Speaking
1. Candidates talk about themselves 2. Candidates talk about one topic chosen from a list of three. Graphic input. 3. Candidates negotiate, in 'information gap' task. 4. Candidates take part in role play based on everyday situations

pretests and in the present form of the examination. By the end of this year, a decision on the final format of the new examination will be reached.

For further information, contact Sibylle Bolton.

ITÉ

Now that ITÉ has tests of Irish at Waystage and Threshold levels, it is clear that a course to prepare students for them will be required. Great interest has been shown in the tests, but the main question the teachers ask is 'Where is the course book?' The course, which will take about three years to produce, will be in three stages, called Breakthrough, Waystage and Threshold. The need for a Breakthrough level test has been very clear, and a first draft of this new test is now almost complete.

Siuán Ni Mhaonaigh has spoken about the tests at conferences held in Toronto and Manchester, and a good network of contacts with teachers and course organisers around the world is now being established.

Other information from ITÉ includes the fact that the Threshold Level for Irish is almost complete (the author is Dr Dónall Ó Baoill of ITÉ) and that Joe Sheils, former Head of Modern Languages at ITÉ, has been appointed Head of the Modern Languages Section of the Council of Europe.

ITÉ is now heavily involved in the PAROLE project (DGXIII), which will produce electronic written corpora of contemporary usage for all the languages of the EU, and is also coordinating a 'satellite' project for Norwegian, Icelandic and Irish, which will enable these languages to catch up with work on computational lexica for EU languages.

For further information, contact Eoghan Mac Aogáin.

UNIVERSIDAD DE SALAMANCA AND INSTITUTO CERVANTES

Interest in the Spanish language and culture seems to be on the increase. The number of students of Spanish, of teachers and of candidates for the exams is constantly increasing, and consequently, so is the amount of work and the number of projects undertaken both by the University of Salamanca and the Instituto Cervantes.

Cursos Internacionales de la Universidad de Salamanca exists primarily to teach the Spanish language, and the courses offered in Spanish language and culture have both multiplied in number and become more diverse in type. A great deal has been done in the areas of publicity and advertising, through the mass media and the Internet, as well as through a presence at various fairs and congresses on language teaching. Cursos Internacionales currently offers a variety of courses for teachers of Spanish as a Foreign Language, with general courses held in December, April, July and August, and special courses available for groups. This year, for the first time, a Masters Degree in the Teaching of Spanish as a Foreign Language is also being offered, which brings together some of the top names in this field.

The Instituto Cervantes, through its network of 34 Institutos in 20 countries, offered Spanish language tuition to some 27,000 students during the academic year 1995-96, an increase of 23% over the previous year, and new Institutos were opened in Utrecht and Chicago. These figures reflect the ever-expanding nature of Spanish as a Second Language and the interest of the Instituto in aiding and supporting this growth.

In the area of testing, the Diplomas de Español como Lengua Extranjera (D.E.L.E.) are now well established. The University of Salamanca produces, grades and evaluates these tests on behalf of the Spanish Ministry of Education, and the Instituto Cervantes administers them. The number of Examination Centres and countries where the exams were administered in 1996 was 149 cities in 40 countries. This year there has been almost a 7% increase, with 160 cities in 42 countries now offering DELE exams.

The Instituto Cervantes is currently reviewing the procedures for accreditation of Examination Centres for the purposes of improving quality control and ensuring a more efficient handling of administrative routines. Figures for 1996 show an increase of 16.3% in the number of candidates who took DELE examinations compared to the previous year, a total of 12,468 entrants. Over the past five years the growth of the Diplomas has been sustained at a rate of 10% yearly, which makes last year's figures all the more encouraging.

The University of Salamanca's work on test development also includes production of placement, progress and performance tests for use within the University. In the field of computer evaluation a computer-adaptive testing project is being developed in collaboration with other ALTE members, and the Spanish version of a program called LINGUASKILL is approaching completion. Work is also going on in the field of business exams; within the BULATS programme, three initial versions of Spanish tests have already been produced. The Instituto Cervantes is also working on an exciting and ambitious new project, the Centro Virtual Cervantes (CVC), an Internet-based resource tool for scholars, teachers and students of Spanish as a Second Language: eventually, it will support a discussion forum, interactive language learning materials and resources.

For further information, contact Clara de Vega Santos (Universidad de Salamanca) or José Ramón Parrondo Rodríguez (The Instituto Cervantes).

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UCLES

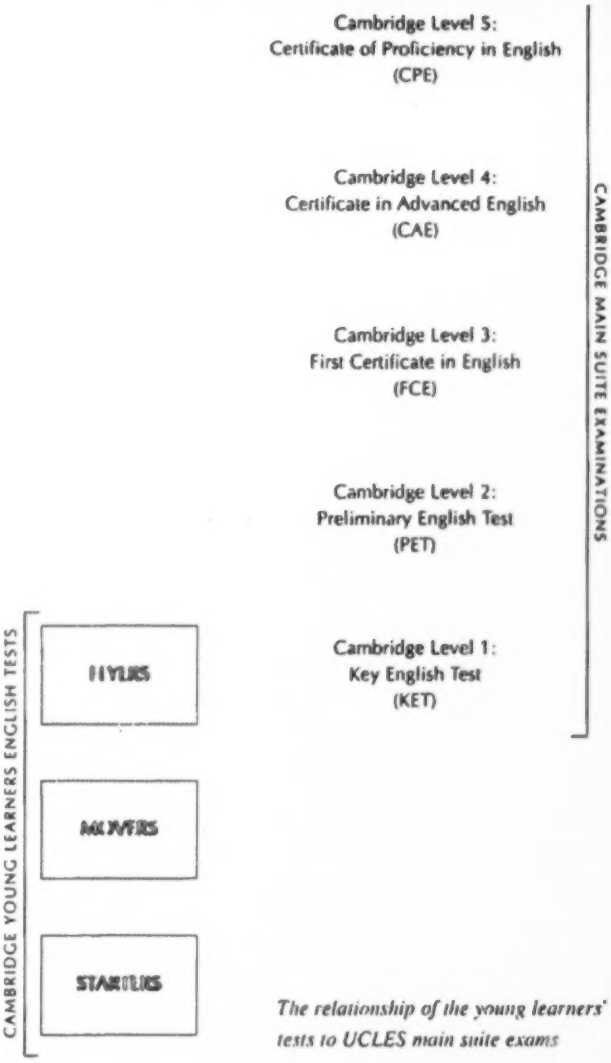
A series of new tests for children aged between 7 and 12 is in the process of being added to UCLES EFL examinations, under the general name of Cambridge Young Learners English Tests. The tests, which are at three levels called Starters, Movers and Flyers, have been developed in collaboration with Homerton College, Cambridge University's teacher training institution, as part of a wider English language project for primary school children.

The tests represent a new departure for UCLES, and a new challenge to provide tests which meet the needs of children both in terms of their interests and their stage of development. In order to do this, a simple, brightly coloured layout has been adopted, and test materials draw on a clearly defined area of topics and vocabulary derived from a range of popular young learners' course books.

Tests are administered, whenever possible, in or near to the children's usual classrooms. There are no global fixed dates for test administration, so that dates can be arranged to fit in with local preferences. Every child who completes a test receives an award, with a profile of achievement in each of the skill areas, Reading and Writing, Listening and Speaking. Awards should be received by the test centres within a month of the adminstration of the tests.

In developing this new series of tests, UCLES is acknowledging the growing tendency throughout the world to introduce English teaching into the school curriculum for children at an increasingly early stage. The highest level of the young learners' tests, Flyers, is at about the same level of language as the Key English Test (Waystage Level), and it is possible for children to progress, as they grow up, from the young learners' tests to the already well-established Cambridge tests for adult learners, KET, PET, FCE, CAE and CPE.

For more information on Cambridge Young Learners English Tests, contact Margaret Matthews, EFL Division, UCLES.



The relationship of the young learners' tests to UCLES main suite exams

News from the Final Conference on Language Learning for a new Europe

(Council of Europe, Council for Cultural Co-operation, Education Committee) Strasbourg 15-18 April 1997

The Final Conference on Language Learning for a new Europe, which spanned four days, was divided into plenary sessions, commissions and working groups during which time the delegates examined the final report of the project Language Learning for European Citizenship (1989-1996). ALTE was formally represented by the Manager at the conference, which was also attended by delegates representing several of the ALTE institutions (CITO, Goethe Institut, ITÉ, UCLES, University of Bergen, University of Jyväskylä).

ALTE as an organisation had been particularly involved in Phase II of the project, especially the Common Framework of Reference for which ALTE had been commissioned by the Council of Europe to produce the supplementary User's Guide for Examiners (reported in ALTE News July 1996 and ALTE News January 1997).

One of the main recommendations for further action was that the Common Framework should be refined and further developed, especially through pilot applications in a balanced sample of countries as well as with different types of user-institutions and levels of education. ALTE, together with several other testing bodies, formally registered an interest in assisting with some aspects of this activity.

In addition, the conference concluded that a permanent service should be provided by the Council of Europe relating to the updating and development of specifications of objectives of the Threshold type, including Waystage and Vantage Level and taking into account developments concerning the Common Framework. ALTE, which supported the development of the Vantage Level, will continue to collaborate with the authors on the further refinement of the specification and piloting with user groups.

Stockholm University

Stockholm University is one of the largest universities in Sweden, with about 32,000 students and more than 1,700 graduate students. There are four faculties: Law, Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences, and 80 departments offer approximately 800 courses and 25 study programmes every year.

The University was founded in 1878, out of a wish – arising from the liberal-radical ideologies of the time – to create an institute of higher education located in the nation's political and economic capital that would act as a centre of modern research. There was a marked contrast between the new University College and the traditional universities, which dated from medieval times. Among the distinguished teachers and researchers who were invited to work at the College was Svante Arrhenius, winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1903. Another was Sonja Kovalevsky, a prominent Russian-born mathematician, who in 1884 became a Professor at Stockholm, thus becoming the first woman in Europe to gain such a distinction.

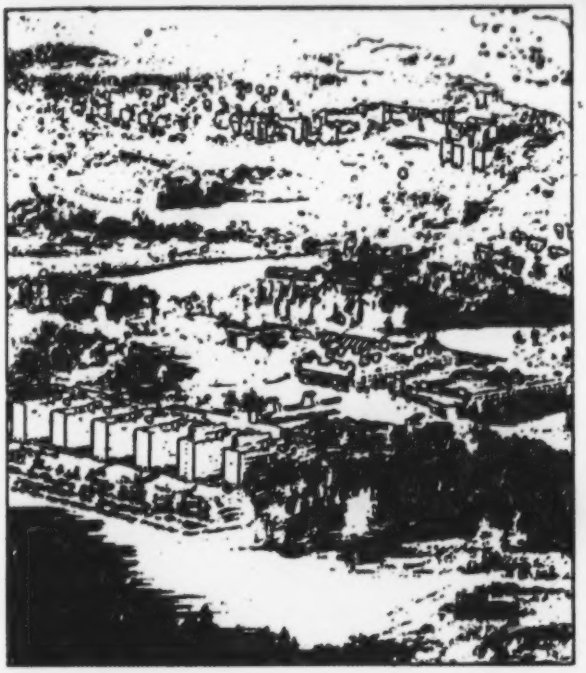
The first lectures given at the Stockholm University College, in physics and chemistry, were open to the public, helping to establish its character as a free educational institution. Today, open lectures still enable the public to benefit from contact with some of the University's most eminent researchers and specialists.

In the early 1970s the University moved from the city centre to Frescati, located on Djurgården, where it is housed in a number of buildings constructed in a variety of architectural styles. An auditorium with seating for 1,200 persons is currently under construction, and, when completed, will make it possible for Stockholm University to stage large international conferences. The University Library is one of the largest and most modern in Europe, with 2.4 million books and some 9,000 periodicals.

International cooperation and exchange programmes are frequent and are becoming increasingly important. Departments and researchers co-operate with universities from all over the world. The University maintains international agreements for cooperation with academic institutions in Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Japan, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, South Korea, Spain, Taiwan, Thailand and Venezuela.

Stockholm University participates in several exchange programmes within the European Union, for instance ERASMUS, UNICA and COMETT. Within the Nordic countries there is the NORDPLUS programme for students and teachers. The University is also an active member of the Baltic University, a network of universities in the capital cities of the Baltic area. COPERNICUS is another important international research project in which the University takes part.

In the Faculty of Humanities 31 languages are offered at undergraduate level. Among the more unusual courses of study, which can be pursued only in Stockholm, are Latvian, Lithuanian, Korean,



Part of Stockholm University

Dutch and Sign Language. Students are working on these languages at doctoral level, and there are 25 professorships in this area. There is also a research centre for bilingualism.

The Department of Scandinavian Languages

According to the 1996 figures there are 1,600 students, 25 doctoral students and approximately 40 lecturers or researchers in this department. The Department of Scandinavian languages – Institutionen för Nordiska Språk – offers a wide variety of courses in both modern and historical aspects of the Scandinavian languages, focusing mainly on Swedish.

Research projects within the Department relate to many topics which are central to this area of study. At present there is ongoing research on, among other topics, literacy in the Middle Ages, Stockholm dialects, child language acquisition, Swedish as a Second Language for the deaf, the etymology of place names, text comprehensibility, and modern Swedish grammar.

Approximately half of the courses are integrated with teacher training programmes (including those for teachers of Swedish as a Second Language). There are also separate courses in modern Swedish, Swedish and Nordic history of language, Norwegian, Danish and Swedish as a Second Language for the deaf, rhetoric, and child language acquisition. Several courses cater for those interested in professional discourse. All teaching is in Swedish and students must have an idiomatic command of the oral and written language in order to meet course requirements. Visiting students who meet the required standard may attend these courses.

There are courses which cater especially for foreign students with a

good working knowledge of Swedish. Courses are offered as two programmes at different levels.

The first of these, Svenska för studenter med utländsk förutbildning, consists of preparatory courses in Swedish as a Foreign Language for students who wish to fulfil the entrance requirement in Swedish for higher education in Sweden.

The second, Nordska språk för studenter med utländsk förutbildning, is an undergraduate programme starting with a one semester course covering theoretical and practical aspects of oral and written Swedish. In the subsequent two semesters, students can choose from a smorgasbord of courses covering most of the above-mentioned topics of the subject.

Swedish as a Second/Foreign Language

In talking about language learning, three different kinds of Swedish can be distinguished – native Swedish, Swedish as a Second Language and Swedish as a Foreign Language.

During the 50 years of its existence, the (non-native) Swedish Language Course at Stockholm University has used four different terms: Swedish for Foreign Students, Swedish for non-Swedish Speaking Students, Swedish as a Second Language and Swedish as a Foreign Language. Outside the University the most common course names have been: Swedish for Foreigners and Swedish for Immigrants. These terms cover more or less the same subject but reflect different political, economic and linguistic perspectives.

In the fifties the term Swedish for Foreign Students had no negative connotations, but the word 'foreigner' eventually came to be used pejoratively and was replaced by 'immigrant'. The word 'students' implies academic studies, as the prerequisite was a high school diploma or equivalent.

In 1965, when state funding was granted, the course name was changed to Swedish for non-Swedish Speaking Students.

Ingrid Nordling, Margaretha Corell and Gunlög Sundberg of the Department of Scandinavian Languages, Stockholm, Sweden

In the 70s there was a growing consensus that learning a language in the country where it is spoken is called second language acquisition while learning a language outside the country where it is spoken is foreign language acquisition. For that reason the term used in course titles was changed to Swedish as a Second Language in 1985 when the Preparatory Courses were introduced.

However, in the early 90s Swedish as a Second Language became intimately linked with the subject taught at school. Moreover, it is the name given to the academic courses for future schoolteachers of Swedish as a Second Language. In order to keep the different kinds of courses separate the term Swedish as a Foreign Language came back into use.

During the 70s there was a heated debate regarding the benefits of instruction as opposed to natural language acquisition. For some people foreign language acquisition equalled instructed acquisition and second language acquisition equalled natural acquisition. As the University believes in language instruction, this constitutes another reason for the latest change of name. The University's Swedish courses prepare students for university studies in Swedish and the style of instruction is therefore more theoretical than in other language schools.

The main difference between these preparatory courses and other courses in Swedish is the pace of learning and the final level of achievement. Research shows that it normally takes five to seven years to master a new language. Students on the University's courses have to speed this process up as they have only three semesters, one and a half years, in which to achieve this.

To sum up, although the courses have changed names over the years and the content has reflected current theories about language learning, the focus on imparting knowledge of and about Swedish has remained the same.

In Sweden, Swedish as a Second Language is slowly gaining strength and status as a subject by its own merits. There is a growing insight into the benefits of bilingualism and there are more and better trained teachers. Research in this area is being carried out at all the universities in Sweden. Stockholm University is unique in carrying out research into Swedish as a Second Language not only in the department of Scandinavian Languages but also in the Department of Linguistics and, under the guidance of Kenneth Hyltenstam, the first professor of bilingualism in the Nordic Countries, at the Centre for Bilingualism.

In recent years the number of persons resident in Sweden but born abroad has been increasing rapidly as a percentage of the population, and the need for tuition in Swedish as a Second Language has grown as a consequence of this. Whereas during the nineteenth century only 2% of the population were born outside the country, and by the 1950s this had increased by only 1%, by 1993 there had been a leap to 10% and a year later, in 1994, it had reached 13%. The reason for the great increase in the 90s is that between 1990 and 1994 Sweden received more than 70,000 refugees annually, most of them coming from the former Yugoslavia.

The fate of the Swedish languages

If language is defined as a means of communication, an instrument for thinking and a constituent of identity, the question must be asked whether there is a future for the Swedish language in any of its three modes, as a Native Language, a Second Language or a Foreign Language. Is Sweden in fact on the verge of becoming a bilingual country? Great concern has been expressed as to whether the Swedish language will be able to survive in an integrated Europe and in a shrinking world. The fear is that Swedish may decline into a minority language rather than surviving as a national language.

If the word 'språkvård' (preservation of the purity of the language) is looked up in the Swedish National Encyclopaedia for 1995, it will be seen that Margareta Westman, Professor of Swedish Language, writes '..on the whole Swedish is not considered to be at risk of being taken over by English'. However, in a plenary lecture given in Helsinki in 1995, Professor Kenneth Hyltenstam summarises the views of various researchers on what is happening to the Swedish language, and warns that although Swedish is a majority language in Sweden and as such should have a fair chance of survival, the ground is prepared for a change to English, and this could happen increasingly rapidly as a growing number of schools at all levels in Sweden are now teaching through the medium of the English language.

Factors that favour the survival of Swedish, however, are the existence of a rich and flourishing literature and the fact that the Swedish language is highly standardised.

Stockholm University in ALTE

Stockholm University, to be precise the Department of Scandinavian Languages, where the Rikstest is produced, became a member of ALTE in 1996. Already it is heavily involved in ALTE projects as well as in many new developments in the tests of Sweden.

In November 1996 a new examination in Swedish as a Second Language for adult learners was introduced. This is the National Test of Swedish for Immigrants (SFI provet). This examination tests general proficiency at ALTE levels 1 to 3. A score of 2 on the test qualifies the holder for access to vocational training and secondary education.

In June 1997 the Rikstest has its last administration, having been in use for fifteen years. It is being replaced by the Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS), a test of language for specific purpose at ALTE levels 3 to 5. A score of 4 is needed as a qualification for study at university level.

Negotiations have been going on for some time with the National Agency for Labour over the introduction of a national test in work or business-related language. In June 1997 a proposal is being submitted by the University of Umeå, with the collaboration of Stockholm University. This test will span ALTE levels 3 to 5.

In early 1997 the 'FINGS' group of ALTE members (Finland, Ireland, Norway, Greece and Sweden) received funding under the European Commission's 'Socrates' Programme for the translation and adaptation of existing ALTE documents. Margaretha Corell and Gunlög Sundberg will be working on this project and will apply for funding for 1998 in order to complete the project. In addition, a researcher and assistant have been taken on to make a needs analysis for Breakthrough level.

Resident 'webmaster' Margareta Skoglund Åslin is currently engaged in configuring and building a website for the Department of Scandinavian Languages. The Test in Swedish for University Studies (TISUS) will have its own link, and no difficulty in creating a link with the ALTE website is expected.

For further information, contact Margaretha Corell.

PUBLICATION OF *WAYSTAGE 1990* AND *THRESHOLD 1990*

Waystage and Threshold levels are to be published for the first time in the UK, as *Waystage 1990* and *Threshold 1990*, by Cambridge University Press during autumn 1997.

The cost of each volume will be about £15.00. ISBNs are as follows:

0-521-56707-6 for *Waystage 1990*, and
0-521-56706-8 for *Threshold 1990*.

The following websites give information on members of ALTE:

ALTE	http://www.edunet.com/alte
Alliance Française	http://www.paris.alliancefrancaise.fr
Bergen	http://www.hf.uib.no/i/nor/nortest
DVV	http://www.rz.uni-frankfurt.de/die/pz
Instituto Cervantes	http://www.cervantes.es
Jyväskylä	http://wwwoph.fi/kielitutkinnot
Salamanca	http://www.usal.es/curespus
Stockholm	http://www.nordiska.su.se
UCLES	http://www.ucles.org.uk